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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Monday, March 30, 1936.

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Hello folks. I believe it was about a month ago I promised to give a series of broadcasts on growing flowers and recently I have received a number of letters reminding me of my promise. Now we have three main groups or classes of ornamentals, first the hardy shrubs including evergreens and roses, second, the annual flowering plants, and third, the perennials. The hardy shrubs, evergreens and roses constitute the more permanent part of our plantings, but it sometimes requires two or three years to get these established and in the meantime we can use the annuals and perennials to good advantage, in fact the annuals and perennials should always have a place in our flower gardens.

It goes without saying that a few well chosen shade trees and a good lawn are necessary to form the background and the foreground of our whole scheme or plan. Next in order would be the shrubbery plantings about the house foundations and along the borders of the lawn. In some cases hedges to separate the lawn from the garden or along the road leading to the house might be desirable. I am trying to picture for you a typical or ideal layout with the home as the central figure in the picture. Trees as a background and flanking the house, a broad, open lawn in front, the roadway and walk to one side of the lawn, a hedge or shrubbery border separating the lawn from the garden or adjoining property, mixed plantings of shrubbery around the house foundations but not entirely obscuring the foundation. That makes up the permanent part of our plan that we should strive for. No cluttering up of the lawn with trees and shrubbery or hedges along the front. Of course if you have a fine tree or two in front I would not remove them but they can be trimmed so that there will be at least a partial view of the house from the highway, and also a chance for you to see what is going by on the highway. In any event do not make shut-ins of yourselves.

Now for our annual and perennial flowers, and the manner in which they should be used in our home improvement scheme. First the annuals, and there are annuals that are suited to most every location and condition. In case you want a low border along a garden pathway or along the edge of shrubbery border you have sweet alyssum, mignonette, candytuft, ageratum, nasturtium and a number of others. If you want a tall background planting to hide some unsightly view you can plant castor bean, cosmos, sunflowers, heliopsis, spiderflower, princesfeather and love-lies-bleeding. If it is an old shed or an unsightly fence that you wish to cover you can plant scarlet runner bean, Japanese morning glories, or secure a packet of mixed gourd seeds and plant them and I'll guarantee you will get results.

Between these extremes in height, that is from 6 inches in the case of the sweet alyssum, to 6 or 8 feet with the castor beans, you have all

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gradations in height and habit of growth. Did you folks who live in western Kansas and in Oklahoma and Texas know that some of the seedsmen are now listing milo, feterita, and even broomcorn among the ornamentals. These are annuals and make a fine appearance when planted as a background.

Now among the annuals of intermediate height I might mention poppies, marigolds, asters, balsams, petunias, scarlet sage, periwinkle or vinca, zinnias, snapdragons, calendula, gypsophilla, scabiosa, phlox drummondii, coxcomb, salpiglossis, strawflower and many others. In fact about five packets of seeds of annual flowering plants costing not more than 25 cents will give you a whole flower garden for the summer.

Now for a word about the culture of annuals. The majority of the annuals may be seeded right where they are to grow and the plants thinned. It has been my observation that there is always a tendency to allow the plants to remain too thick and crowded and as a result the blossoms are small. Annual flowering plants will grow on any good soil, but they do want some fertilizer and the soil should be well broken up and prepared. A location where the plants will get full sunlight is best but many of the annuals will give fair results in partial shade. They should not be planted near trees or directly in the shade of trees as the trees draw all of the moisture and also rob the annuals of their share of the plant food in the soil.

Barnlot compost is the best fertilizer although cottonseed meal and mixed fertilizers will serve fairly well. You want your annuals to grow quickly and come into bloom early so the soil should be rich. Another point to remember is that these plants require plenty of water and should be well watered during dry periods. Some of the annuals like the marigolds, scarlet sage, periwinkles and zinnias will bloom from early summer until killed by frost, especially if the flowers are kept picked and the ground well cultivated. Asters do best when grown under cloth shade. Incidentally the seed growers have developed strains of asters that are resistant to wilt diseases, in fact there has been a great improvement in all annual flowering plants especially in asters, zinnias, nasturtiums, petunias and marigolds. Get a seed catalog, pick out and order a few packets of seeds of annual flowering plants and I'll be back next week with more suggestions about planting and cultivating them.

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